

great seal of England, and to quote from the historic account, "tooke possession of the saide lande in the right of the Crowne of England, by digging up a turfe and receiving the same with a hazell wand delivered unto him after the manner of the lawe and custome of England. Then he signified unto the company, both strangers and others, that from thenceforth they were to live in that lande as the territories appertayning unto the Crowne of England, and to be governed by such lawes as by good advise should be set down." A pillar was erected which bore the royal arms engraved on a plate of lead, and amid cheers from the assembled people, Newfoundland was formally proclaimed a colony of the British Crown. That was on Monday, August 5th, 1583.

But long before that day St. John's was the recognized centre of the island's fish business, and the daring and determined West country merchants were masters of an immense and immensely lucrative international trade. There were thirty-six vessels in St. John's when Gilbert established the colony. Hayes, his second in command, in his narrative of the expedition calls St. John's "a place very populous and much frequented." Gilbert's far abler and more famous half brother, Sir Walter Raleigh, the true father of British colonial enterprise, declared in 1594, that if any harm should befall the Newfoundland fleet, it would be the greatest calamity which could happen England. By the way, one cannot help thinking how vastly different would have been the fortunes of St. John's and of Newfoundland, had Raleigh instead of Gilbert been the man in command of that first colonising expedition. Gilbert was a philosopher, Raleigh was a genius. Gilbert was a visionary, Raleigh brought visions to pass. Britain's oldest born had been born to better days had the man of affairs and not the idealist had her earliest fortunes in control.

From 1583 onward, St. John's gradually assumed increased importance. Those bluff and haphazard arbiters of a very rough and haphazard law, the fishing admirals, were superseded, by and by, by governors who bore the royal commission. Some of these, sooth to tell, had not much more breadth of vision than the fishing skippers that preceded them. But they had a due sense of responsibility, and so very slowly, and with many lapses

and vicissitudes, the little capital took on more and more of permanence and order. It is interesting to try to visualize those early days, to picture to oneself the gradual pushing back of the forest which originally skirted the harbor to the water's edge, the widening of the paths into irregular roadways with rough houses and cottages built at intervals. It is interesting to think of the quaint craft that have entered yonder Narrows and come to anchor in this landlocked harbor, and of the quaint crews that manned them. What polyglot speech was heard on the old wharves and stages and flakes, with the deep-toned dialects of Devon and Dorset and Somerset predominating over all. What shouts of fighting have echoed around these peaceful hills, what scenes of riot and bloodshed have taken place in these quiet streets. Ah, there have been stirring times indeed in our rough island story, and St. John's has ever been the very centre of them. Think of the days when Saltee rovers harassed our fishermen, or when French ships of war hovered outside the harbor, and the great chain was stretched across the Narrows from Chain Rock to the Pancake, to keep them out. Think of the "excursions and alarums" when the enemy had made a landing in some near-by harbor and were marching on the town. But, after all, it remains unhappily true that the greatest enemies of St. John's and of Newfoundland were those who ought to have been their best friends, the rich and powerful merchant adventurers of the West Countree, who kept the island as a preserve of their own, century after century. It was the riches of Newfoundland and not her poverty that kept her so long from development and settlement. She built up many a stately mansion on the hillsides of Devon and Dorset and Somerset, and poured into the coffers of the astute and selfish traders many a princely fortune, while she herself was kept a howling wilderness, and settlement upon her shores made a penal offence. Lord Bacon may well, as Prowse suggests, have had these Devon merchants in mind, when he said that the government should not depend upon the counsel of too many in respect of the treatment of a plantation, and that those whose judgment was sought should be "rather noblemen and gentlemen than merchants, for they look ever to the present gain."